

RESOLUTIONS REFERRED TO ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE

3. RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING CALIFORNIA CITIES TO OPPOSE THE CALIFORNIA DESERT PROTECTION ACT OF 2011

Source: City of Needles

Referred To: Environmental Quality Policy Committee

Recommendation to General Resolutions Committee:

WHEREAS, in 1993 Senator Diane Feinstein introduced the California Desert Protection Act of 1994 which became federal law and was passed by the United States Congress on October 8, 1994, and

WHEREAS, this act established the Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks and the Mojave National Preserve in the California desert; and

WHEREAS, this act designated 69 wilderness areas as additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA), the Yuma District, the Bakersfield District, and the California Desert District of the Bureau of Land Management permits grazing in such areas; and

WHEREAS, the Act abolished Death Valley National Monument, established in 1933 and 1937, and incorporated its lands into a new Death Valley National Park administered as part of the National Park System. Grazing of domestic livestock was permitted to continue at no more than the then-current level. The Act also required the Secretary of the Interior to study the suitability of lands within and outside the boundaries of the park as a reservation for the Timbisha Shoshone Tribe; and

WHEREAS, the Act abolished Joshua Tree National Monument, established in 1936, and incorporated its lands into Joshua Tree National Park; and

WHEREAS, the Act established the Mojave National Preserve, consisting of approximately 1,419,800 acres (5,746 km²; 2,218.4 sq mi), and abolished the East Mojave National Scenic Area, which was designated in 1981. The preserve was to be administered in accordance with National Park System laws. Hunting, fishing and trapping were permitted as allowed by federal and state laws, with certain exceptions. Mining claims were governed by the National Park System laws, and grazing was permitted to continue at no more than the then-current level; and

WHEREAS, the Act required the Secretary of the Interior to ensure that American Indian people have access to the lands designated under the Act for traditional cultural and religious purposes, in recognition of their prior use of these lands for these purposes. Upon the request of an Indian tribe or religious community, the Secretary must temporarily close specific portions to the general public to protect the privacy of traditional cultural and religious activities; and

WHEREAS, flights by military aircraft over the lands designated by the Act were not restricted or precluded, including over flights that can be seen or heard from these lands; and

WHEREAS, Congress found that federally owned desert lands of southern California constitute a public wildland resource of extraordinary and inestimable value for current and future generations; these desert wildlands have unique scenic, historical, archeological, environmental, ecological, wildlife, cultural,

scientific, educational and recreational values; the California desert public land resources are threatened by adverse pressures which impair their public and natural values; the California desert is a cohesive unit posing difficult resource protection and management challenges; statutory land unit designations are necessary to protect these lands; and

WHEREAS, Senator Dianne Feinstein, author of the 1994 California Desert Protection Act has introduced legislation "California Desert Protection Act of 2011" that will set aside new land in the Mojave Desert for conservation, recreation and other purposes; and

WHEREAS, the proposed legislation will take AN ADDITIONAL 1.6 million acres of Bureau of Land Management land out of potential development, including mining exploration, by designating two new "National Monuments", one adjacent to the Mojave National Preserve which will take 1.5 million acres out of BLM multiple use in addition to 800,000 acres out of private ownership and one adjacent to the Joshua Tree National Park; and

WHEREAS, this legislation will result in just about every square inch of the desert spoken for, either for military use, national parks, wilderness and special conservation areas, Indian reservations and other types of land management (half of the lands under BLM management are protected under wilderness or special conservation area restrictions); and

WHEREAS, projects, such as California mandated solar energy development, that would disturb or destroy habitat must make up for that loss by purchasing private habitat at ratios of at least three acres for every one acre disturbed; and

WHEREAS, at that rate, even in the nation's largest county, San Bernardino, just three solar projects on federal land will require an amount of private land acquisition of 22,000 acres, or roughly 34 square miles, land will come off of the county's tax rolls and we will literally run out of mitigation land after a handful of projects; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 requires that 10,000 megawatts of renewable energy be generated on public land in the west. To meet California's mandate of having 33 percent of our energy come from renewable sources, it requires more that 20,000 megawatts of production and they are looking mainly at public lands. If we approve that much solar, the result would be a regulatory lockdown on the rest of the Desert by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Department of Fish and Game; and

WHEREAS, the Desert Protection Act of 1994 encompassed 1.5 million acres or 2,218.4 square miles plus an additional 800,000 acres of private land or 1,250 square miles; Fort Irwin, 1,000 square miles; 29 Palms Marine Base, 931.7 square miles and they have also applied for an additional 420,000 acres in 2008, or 659.375 square miles totaling 6,059.48 square miles; and

WHEREAS, the California Desert Protection Act of 2011 will take OVER 2,300 square miles, not including the acreage of wilderness located outside any of the above mentioned areas (this total mileage would roughly encompass Rhode Island, Delaware, and Connecticut); and

WHEREAS, these public lands have long supported a range of beneficial uses and efforts have been made to protect the desert inhabitants. Let's not destroy the desert or our ability to use and enjoy it.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the General Assembly of the League of California Cities assembled at the Annual Conference in San Diego, September 7, 2012, that the

League encourages California cities to adopt resolutions in opposition to the California Desert Protection Act of 2011.

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League of California Cities Staff Analysis

Staff: Kyra Ross, Legislative Representative, (916) 658-8252
Committee: Environmental Quality Policy Committee

Summary:

This resolution encourages California cities to oppose the California Desert Protection Act of 2011.

Background:

The California Desert Protection Act of 2011 (S. 138) is legislation proposed by Senator Dianne Feinstein which would provide for conservation, enhanced recreation opportunities, and development of renewable energy in the California Desert Conservation Area. The Measure would:

- Create two new national monuments: the 941,000 acres Mojave Trails National Monument along Route 66 and the 134,000 acres Sand to Snow National Monument, which connects Joshua Tree National Park to the San Bernardino Mountains.
- Add adjacent lands to Joshua Tree National Park, Death Valley National Park and Mohave National Preserve;
- Protect nearly 76 miles of waterways;
- Designate five new wilderness areas;
- Designate approximately 250,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management wilderness areas near Fort Irwin;
- Enhance recreational opportunities; and,
- Designate four existing off-highway vehicle areas in the California Desert as permanent.

S. 138 is a re-introduction of S. 2921, the California Desert Protection Act of 2010 which is now dead. S. 138 was introduced in January 2011 and was referred to the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The measure has not yet been set for hearing by the Committee.

Fiscal Impact:

Unknown. No direct fiscal impact to city general funds.

Existing League Policy:

The League's Mission Statement is "to expand and protect local control for cities through education and advocacy to enhance the quality of life for all Californians."

Specific to this Resolution, existing policy offers no specific policy on this issue.

The League's Strategic Priorities for 2012, as adopted by the League Board of Directors, include:

2) **Promote Local Control for Strong Cities:** Support or oppose legislation and proposed constitutional amendments based on whether they advance maximum local control by city governments over city revenues, land use, redevelopment and other private activities to advance the public health, safety and welfare of city residents.

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